

CITY OF BELLEVUE
BELLEVUE TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION
MINUTES

March 10, 2016
6:30 p.m.

Bellevue City Hall
City Council Conference Room 1E-113

COMMISSIONERS PRESENT: Chair Lampe, Commissioners Bishop, Chirls, Simas,
Woosley, Zahn

COMMISSIONERS ABSENT: Commissioner Larrivee

STAFF PRESENT: Kevin McDonald, Kristi Oosterveen, Mike Ingram, Eric
Miller, Department of Transportation

OTHERS PRESENT: Councilmember Wallace, Councilmember Lee
Chris Breiland, Fehr & Peers

RECORDING SECRETARY: Gerry Lindsay

1. CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order at 6:32 p.m. by Chair Lampe who presided.

2. ROLL CALL

Upon the call of the roll, all Commissioners were present with the exception of Commissioner Larrivee who was excused.

3. PUBLIC COMMENT - None

4. APPROVAL OF AGENDA

A motion to approve the agenda was made by Commissioner Woosley. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Chirls and the motion carried unanimously.

5. COMMUNICATIONS FROM CITY COUNCIL, COMMUNITY COUNCIL,
BOARDS AND COMMISSIONS

Councilmember Lee officially passed the Council liaison responsibilities over to Councilmember Wallace. He said he was proud to have held the position and for his role in appointing so many to the Transportation Commission. The Commission is doing a very good job in spite of the challenges involved. A number of Commissioners have over the years gone on to become Councilmembers, and others have gone on to positions in county and state government.

Councilmember Lee also thanked the staff for all the work they do.

Councilmember Wallace reported that he met earlier in the week with Chair Lampe and Senior Planner Kevin McDonald to talk about the Commission's agenda for 2016. He said it was his

intention to attend as many Commission meetings as possible during the year, but not to overpower or get in the way of the work of the Commission.

6. DRAFT MINUTES REVIEW/APPROVAL

A. January 28, 2016

Mr. McDonald pointed out the need to change the references of “Deputy Mayor Wallace” to “Councilmember Mayor Wallace.”

A motion to approve the minutes as amended was made by Commissioner Chirls. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Zahn and the motion carried unanimously.

B. February 11, 2016

Commissioner Woosley referred to the penultimate paragraph on page 7 and asked to have added to the end of the first sentence “and the number of vehicle miles traveled.”

A motion to approve the minutes as amended was made by Commissioner Woosley. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Chirls and the motion carried unanimously.

7. STUDY SESSION

A. Transportation Improvement Program

Capital Facilities Planning and Programming Administrator Kristi Oosterveen briefly reviewed the relationship between the Transportation Improvement Program (TIP), the Capital Investment Program (CIP), and the Transportation Facilities Plan (TFP), as well as regional projects in which the city might wish to participate. The TIP is not revenue constrained and the projects on the list are those that could be addressed should funding become available. Projects from the TIP feed into the regional Transportation Improvement Program managed by the Puget Sound Regional Council, and the state Transportation Improvement Program managed by the Washington State Department of Transportation. Projects in the TIP may be eligible for grants.

Ms. Oosterveen said the proposed 2017-2022 TIP is divided into four sections. In Section I are projects that are currently in the adopted 2015-2021 CIP. Section II holds projects that are included in the adopted 2016-2027 TFP. In Section III are unfunded local projects that have been identified but which are not in either Section I or Section II. The Section IV projects are regional or outside agency-led projects in which the city might wish to participate.

Only three projects are proposed to be added to the TIP, and 14 projects are proposed to be deleted due to their completion or non-inclusion in the Comprehensive Transportation Project List, or because they have been combined with another existing TIP project. The next phases of the West Lake Sammamish Parkway project is proposed to be added to Section II as TFP-257, and NE Spring Boulevard between 130th Avenue NE and 132nd Avenue NE is proposed to be added to Section III as it could be the next phase of an existing CIP project. The Eastside rail corridor grade-separated crossing at NE 4th Street project is also proposed to be added to Section III.

Commissioner Bishop commented that after spending a significant amount of the \$300 million CIP on the Spring District project, yet another \$13.6 million will be added to the list of potential projects. Ms. Oosterveen reminded him that the TIP is not revenue constrained. Whether or not the subsequent phase makes its way into the CIP process will be part of the CIP discussions.

Councilmember Wallace asked if having the West Lake Sammamish Parkway projects included in the various sections of the TIP could translate into completing two more phases over the next 12 years. Ms. Oosterveen explained that the dollars, especially in the TFP section, are unsecured and are not actually in hand. They are dollars that could be used to start another phase.

Commissioner Bishop commented that the new project TFP-257 addresses phases 3, 4 and 5, each of which covers about a mile. The \$8 million shown does not cover the rest of the parkway. He asked why a number large enough to address the rest of the parkway was not included. Ms. Oosterveen said the dollar amounts shown are those approved in the TFP. The Commission could elect to increase the dollar amount above \$8 million, but it would need to be remembered in going back through the TFP again that the \$8 million was what was available to be put toward the project phasing. Commissioner Bishop argued that the unconstrained TIP should include a more realistic dollar amount relative to what the last three phases will cost.

Commissioner Woosley suggested that if the TIP is financially unconstrained, the dollar figures shown should in fact represent the best estimate for what it would cost to construct each project listed. Capital Programming Manager Eric Miller said each phase is estimated to cost \$8 million, so to cover phases 3, 4 and 5 the dollar figure would be \$24 million. There was agreement to show TFP-257 at \$24 million.

Chair Lampe asked if the Eastside rail corridor project should in fact be shown in Section IV because of the involvement of King County in the project. Mr. Miller agreed that the project is located in a primarily county owned corridor. The project is, however, in Bellevue's plans and could be led by the city. It could be listed in either section; the point is to make sure the project is in the TIP to make it eligible for grant funds.

Commissioner Bishop suggested the county has no money to build such projects and as such it will need to be a city project, making it appropriate for Section III.

Councilmember Wallace said one option would be to include a project to purchase the rail corridor.

Commissioner Woosley pointed out that Sound Transit has an easement on the corridor, and Kirkland in purchasing its section saw its purchase delayed until Sound Transit secured its easement. The city is expecting to be the lead agency in constructing the infrastructure, but it will be looking for outside funds. He asked what is in place for NE 8th Street and making connections to the Wilburton light rail station. Mr. Miller said project TFP-244 speaks to the whole corridor. The CIP includes a \$1 million commitment for improvements to the Eastside rail corridor. The city recently secured a modest grant in the amount of \$350,000 to help design the grade separated crossing at NE 8th Street along the alignment of the trail; those funds will be transferred to the county which is committed to funding the design work. Commissioner Woosley asked if the project could also receive funding Sound Transit mitigation dollars as part of the station area planning process. Mr. Miller said Sound Transit is expected to be one of

the partners. Section III includes project R-189, station area planning, which would be in coordination with Sound Transit.

Councilmember Wallace asked about including in the TIP a line item for identifying new technologies and deciding whether or not to implement them. Mr. Miller said the ITS master plan implementation program, project R-156, is a currently funded ongoing program. The TIP adds another \$2 million to the program. Councilmember Wallace noted that program is focused on traffic signals and he was thinking more broadly about funding a program of looking for other new technologies.

Commissioner Woosley said Seattle has a rudimentary technical program that syncs cars up with available parking spaces. According to Inrix, as much as 30 percent of the congestion in the downtown is due to inadequate parking and inefficient access to what is available, and technology could address that issue. Mr. Miller argued that the ITS project goes beyond just traffic signals and includes getting real-time traffic information to users. Additionally, because the TIP is updated annually, it is a fairly easy thing to keep up with the latest technological advances.

Commissioner Zahn suggested that by simply adding a few words to the project description of the ITS master plan implementation program it could be made clear that it includes more than just traffic signals. Mr. Miller said staff would be happy to do that.

Ms. Oosterveen explained that five CIP projects in Section I, TIP numbers 3, 8, 13, 15 and 31, are expected to be substantially completed by the end of 2016 and are thus marked for deletion from the TIP. There are eight projects in Section III that will be removed, TIP numbers 71, 73, 79, 84, 86, 87 and 89.

Commissioner Bishop said it was his understanding that 79, 80, 84 and 86 came from subarea plans and primarily add lanes for capacity purposes. Ms. Oosterveen said all of the projects set for removal did not end up in the TFP, and are not on the Comprehensive Transportation Project List.

Commissioner Bishop asked if any of the projects are related to the Transit Master Plan capital project list. Mr. McDonald said the project list never made it to any of the comprehensive plan documents. All of those projects stand alone from the Comprehensive Plan and thus were never on a list to consolidate in the comprehensive transportation project list. The only candidate projects for the comprehensive transportation project list are those that are already in a subarea plan or in a transportation facility plan.

Ms. Oosterveen pointed out that TIP number 88 is the Transit Master Plan implementation program. The project descriptions lists some of the notable projects but not all of them. The project has a placeholder of \$20 million.

Commissioner Bishop commented that in the old plan there were some additional capacity projects, including turn lanes and through lanes, that got captured by the queue jump concept for transit priority. Those projects, once they are folded into the Transit Master Plan, they become queue jump projects, not capacity projects that the original subarea plans identified as a need.

Commissioner Woosley said the risk is that the zoned land use capacity that is being

implemented will not have adequate infrastructure capacity. Mr. McDonald allowed that because the TIP is not financially constrained, any and all projects could be added to it. However, the purpose of the subarea planning is to define the transportation system that is needed to support the land use. Several subarea plans have recently been updated, including Eastgate, Bel-Red and Factoria, and some of the projects that were on the lists that were consolidated were 20 years old and based on different land use projections and travel demand forecasts. The subsequent more refined land use planning and transportation demand modeling identified those projects as no longer needed to address overall mobility. That is why some projects that have been on the list for a long time were removed.

Commissioner Woosley argued in favor of keeping the projects on the TIP. The Planning Commission and the City Council is going through and updating the various subarea and other plans, and they are realizing it is not feasible to redevelop to the maximum densities allowed, and that the existing land uses are worth more as they are. There is a chance that land use densities are going to be increased through actions such as the Eastgate/I-90 work that is ongoing, and the overdue Bel-Red corridor plan update. The challenge will be to have adequate capacity in the transportation system to accommodate the additional trips that will be generated by the higher densities. The TIP is financially unconstrained and it will do no harm to include projects that at least have some capacity potential.

Commissioner Chirls said he did not deny the need to understand possibilities, but suggested there is no need to worry too much about which projects are on the list given that the list is updated annually. Commissioner Zahn concurred. She noted that every year the Commission reviews the TIP and talks about the projects listed, there is talk about why certain projects should be on the list and the need to keep the list clean. She said where it is known certain projects no longer fit with a particular subarea plan, they should be removed. To leave them year after year will ultimately result in an unmanageable list. While the land use vision may change, the solutions may in fact not look the same as the placeholder projects.

Commissioner Simas agreed as well. Technology is turning over how things happen from a transportation standpoint faster and faster. The prudent approach will be to wait and see, especially in light of the fact that projects can be added to or removed from the TIP annually. Additionally, services such as Uber and Lyft are creating among younger residents a trend toward not owning cars at all, and the rise of intelligent cars could easily result in having more cars in less space.

Commissioner Woosley pointed out the need to retain capacity in the system that meshes with the land use capacity. As the Planning Commission looks at increasing densities in certain areas, they will need to also look at whether there is sufficient planned or identified transportation capacity.

Commissioner Chirls said the need to match land use capacity with transportation capacity is a legitimate concern. However, currently in the downtown there is not enough transportation capacity for the density that is already in place, let alone the density that is planned.

Commissioner Bishop pointed out that a developer recently called on the Commission to include TIP number 89, NE 16th Street from 116th Avenue NE to 120th Avenue NE, yet it is marked for deletion. Mr. Miller said TIP number 90 references the same analysis addressed in TIP number 89. He said staff would verify that.

Councilmember Wallace cautioned against providing false hope. There is not enough funding for transportation projects to get down to those marked for deletion, let alone funding those projects as well. With no hope of them ever getting built, they should be removed from the list.

There was agreement to remove from the TIP project list the eight projects proposed for removal.

Ms. Oosterveen said there are eight projects proposed to be moved to different sections of the TIP. Two projects from Section II are proposed to be transferred to Section I because they are part of the current CIP. There are also six projects in Section III that are proposed to be moved to Section II, because they are now included in the current TFP.

A motion to approve the TIP project list with the proposed changes was made by Commissioner Simas. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Bishop and the motion carried unanimously.

Ms. Oosterveen said she would schedule a public hearing for April 14.

B. Transportation Management Program Review

Senior Transportation Planner Mike Ingram explained that a Transportation Management Program (TMP) is an agreement that is established at the time a development is permitted that obligates the project owner or manager to engage in certain activities to limit or reduce the impacts of the project on the transportation system or on parking. The obligations typically remain in place for the life of the building; some of the agreements that are in place date back to the 1980s. The requirements were first codified by the city in 1987 to create more consistency from building to building. In 1995 the city developed the Transportation Development Code and the requirements were updated and housed in that code. There are currently 56 buildings in the city that have TMP agreements in place. About half of the agreements were established under the 1995 code, and the balance are a mixed bag, primarily comprised of earlier agreements. Under the agreements, building managers are typically required to post information about transit and ridesharing options; distribute information to new employees; designate a responsible party for overseeing the TMP requirements; designate preferred parking for carpools and vanpools; provide a subsidy of \$15/month to onsite employees who commute by carpool, vanpool or transit; provide an emergency ride home to employees who commute by carpool, vanpool or transit who miss their ride home due to unforeseen circumstances.

Commissioner Woosley noted that the TMP requirements apply to the building owner, whereas the Commute Trip Reduction Act (CTR) applies to business owners and also is focused on reducing travel by single-occupant vehicle.

Commissioner Simas asked about the enforcement policies and penalties associated with non-compliance. Mr. Ingram said he has been involved with the TMP for the past ten years and was not aware of any penalties having been imposed. Up until 2007, the city was not even systematically monitoring for compliance. One part of the review of the program will be looking at whether or not an effective enforcement mechanisms is needed.

Mr. Ingram said there is an additional overlay of requirements for office uses in the downtown. A baseline survey must be conducted to determine the rate of drive-alone to buildings one year

after they become occupied, and from there the code specifies that their drive-alone rate must be reduced by 35 percent over ten years. No incremental reductions are specified in the requirements. Prior to 2007 when regular monitoring began, the baseline surveys for some buildings were not done; those buildings were required to do their surveys in 2005. Measurements have been taken every other year since, with the next one due in the fall of 2016. For those buildings that have reached their ten-year mark, it has been shown that reaching the 35 percent requirement is difficult.

Commissioner Zahn asked what other jurisdictions use for their criteria and if they have met with success. She suggested that if the city is going to spend time monitoring, it would be nice to know the work is focused on a true gain. Mr. Ingram said other cities have similar requirements, but he said he was not knowledgeable about the degree to which they have analyzed the effect of their requirements.

Commissioner Chirls said he would like to know the positive and negative consequences experienced by other jurisdictions who have imposed programmatic requirements. He said the goals are laudable, but if there are no incentives or penalties, no one will really pay attention to fulfilling the TMP requirements.

Commissioner Simas said there is a bit of a chicken and egg problem associated with the program. It is incumbent on the cities and the region to develop a transportation system that allows people to carpool, take the bus or use another alternatives to driving alone. The educational component is critical, but it certainly must be frustrating from the point of view of a building owner to have the requirements but not the infrastructure needed for employees to efficiently travel in alternative ways. The options need to be in place before directing building owners to educate their tenants about those options.

Commissioner Woosley concurred and said the lack of alternatives is a major frustration. Business owners on the Eastside are paying two dollars for every dollar of transit service received. He asked how the local TDM program compliments or conflicts with the state CTR requirements. Mr. Ingram agreed to develop a matrix comparing the two.

Commissioner Chirls agreed with Commissioner Simas and said it makes no sense to penalize a building owner or business when the constraints they are living under do not allow them to fulfill their obligations. There are organizations that have done some creative and even radical things by way of providing their employees incentives to not drive alone. The primary reason behind them doing so has been cost they would otherwise incur to build parking.

Commissioner Bishop said he would like to see the results of any research that has been done relative to the contribution of TMP activities to the overall reductions in drive-alone commuting in Bellevue. He suggested that since such programs have been around for 30 years, there should be some data to draw from, either locally or nationally. Any requirements that may have made sense in the beginning but which no longer make sense should be eliminated. Incentives with real economic benefits for the building owners should be identified and put in place.

Commissioner Zahn agreed and highlighted the need to solicit input from stakeholders as part of the review of the TMP requirements. She suggested that while there are some carryovers, the fact is the solution for a given building could be tied to where it is located and the laws of supply and demand. With regard to the latter, she said where there is not a lot of parking

available, building owners will need to think outside the box. Commissioner Chirls suggested a survey should be done that includes building and business owners.

Commissioner Woosley said the city could simply reduce the amount of parking required, which developers would love because they could simply pocket what it would cost per stall to include more parking. That approach, however, would leave buildings underparked and people circling the streets looking for parking. Interestingly, downtown Bellevue currently generates more sales tax revenues than downtown Seattle, a fact that can largely be attributed to the increased difficulty of finding parking in downtown Seattle and what it costs when it is found. Making it harder generally for people to find parking in the downtown could impact sales, so a distinction should be made between office and retail parking. Commissioner Chirls said residential parking should also be carefully considered.

Commissioner Simas pointed out that downtown Seattle and downtown Bellevue have totally different characters, and that likely contributes more to Bellevue's retail successes than parking does. Rather than focusing on parking as the problem, the city should be looking at the solution sets to satisfying the needs of the people as well as the requirements being put upon the building and business owners. Parking in and of itself is not the criminal, it is only one of the elements.

Councilmember Wallace encouraged the Commission to look at where things currently stand in Seattle. They have launched an approach under which their planning and transportation departments work together on solutions. The resulting system is far less rigid than Bellevue's TMP. The world has changed a lot and in order to compete, bigger buildings must provide what is needed to address the demand management issues. The 35 percent requirement Bellevue has is unattainable and should be eliminated, and the financial penalties violate state law, are not enforceable, and should be eliminated as well. Incentives and education will be far more effective going forward. The TDM issue should also be brought before the Planning Commission in conjunction with the Downtown Livability Initiative.

Commissioner Woosley noted that the Planning Commission held an open house on March 9 on potential changes to heights and FAR in the downtown. He said one of the benefits to being able to go higher without any additional density is being able to provide more ground-level public amenities and facilities. He suggested an incentive should be created to allow for pullouts and the like that folks using services like Uber or micro-transit in the downtown can be accommodated.

Mr. Ingram proposed launching the TMP review by providing a management brief to the City Council. Then on May 12 the Commission will be asked to look at specific TMP sites relative to what they are required to do, what they are actually doing, what they are not doing, and anything else they might be doing that they are not specifically required to do. The review will include looking at the performance targets and whether or not they are being met, and how effective the requirements have been. There has been an overall reduction in drive-alone percentages in the city, but it is not known how much of it is attributable to TMP sites. He agreed the work should include a review of what other jurisdictions are doing, and a survey of local building and business owners.

At the Commission's meeting in June, the focus will be on potential alternatives for where to take the program. There was some work done in 2009 on the requirements that included the Commission, and the recommendation was to develop a more flexible approach with a menu of

options from which building owners and managers could choose. Under the proposed approach, those failing to reach their performance targets would be obliged in the next go-around to implement more activities, while those who reaching their targets could ratchet things down. Following Commission review of the draft alternatives, input from the public will be sought on the draft alternatives, a public hearing will be scheduled, and the Commission will forward a recommendation to the Council.

Mr. Ingram said the stakeholder survey will provide early notice of the TMP review initiative and will offer the opportunity to provide early input. Additional public outreach will be done after the Commission has opportunity to look at and comment on the draft alternatives.

Councilmember Wallace pointed out that the 35 percent reduction requirement applies to a lot of buildings in Bellevue, even though no one is able to meet the standard. Mr. Ingram said currently there are only two buildings for which there is measurement data going back ten years, and neither of them achieved the reduction. Nothing more has been required of either, though both have been encouraged to continue to make progress.

Commissioner Chirls asked if the survey will involve a professional company or city staff. Mr. Ingram said there are staff in the planning department who are knowledgeable about surveys who are consulted with in developing surveys. Additionally, the city has an account with Survey Monkey. The city has a list of all the building managers who it is known who to send the survey link to. Commissioner Chirls proposed adding business managers in addition to building managers, and potentially condominium boards as well. He added that it would be helpful to be able to separate the answers from each group.

BREAK

C. Level of Service in Bellevue – Toward a Multimodal Approach to Mobility

Mr. McDonald introduced Chris Breiland with Fehr & Peers, one of the leading experts in the country on the topic of multimodal level of service (LOS). He reminded the Commissioners that the policies included in the recent Comprehensive Plan update provide the direction to focus on multimodal LOS, and the development of the implementation strategy began immediately following adoption of the policies.

Mr. Breiland acknowledged the input of Don Samdahl of Fehr & Peers in drafting the information about to be presented. Mr. Samdahl has a long history with multimodal LOS and transportation concurrency, and worked for the city's transportation department many years ago.

Mr. Breiland said Bellevue is somewhat unique in that there are two separate systems for transportation performance management, one for long-range planning, and one focused on transportation concurrency which takes more of a short-range approach aimed at pairing transportation investment with land use development. Bellevue has been in the concurrency business for some time, predating even some state laws that were put into place with regard to growth management. The practice has evolved over time.

Under state law, the Comprehensive Plan must include elements that talk about different modal systems, and must define the vision for transportation over time. There is no regulatory requirement for jurisdictions to achieve certain performance measures in the long-range

planning context. Cities are required to define transportation systems that mesh with the land use vision and that are fundable. From Bellevue's perspective, the current approach is multimodal in that vehicle level of service is defined using a fairly well-known method. There is a modeshare goal for commute trips, which is a Puget Sound Regional Council requirement for urban centers; there is in place a Transit Master Plan which defines a wide range of performance goals but specifically focuses on the Frequent Transit Network; and there is a Pedestrian and Bicycle Transportation Plan which outlines a network of pedestrian and bicycle facilities across the city that the city would ultimately like to achieve. Together, the pieces define the vision for the long-range transportation plan, but they are somewhat modally isolated in that vehicle level of service does not necessarily speak to how good transit service is in a particular area, nor does the ped/bike network speak to how comfortable it is to walk along those facilities. Concurrency is predicated on the volume-to-capacity (V/C) ratio for vehicles at system intersections and the standard varies based on location within the city. Under the established approach, more congestion is allowed in the downtown than is allowed in an outlying residential area such as Somerset. In a sense, the level of congestion that is tolerable is a reflection of the range of available mobility options but it is not explicitly multimodal.

Mr. Breiland said multimodal LOS is not a new concept. It was introduced in the Highway Capacity Manual in the 1960s, but while it has been around since then it really has not triggered much attention until more recently by jurisdictions that recognize measuring only auto levels of service does not necessarily indicate the impacts and importance of the other modes in providing mobility. A two-lane intersection can be widened to six lanes in order to improve auto level of service, but the result will not be beneficial to those walking and biking. The Puget Sound Regional Council now mandates that Comprehensive Plan updates include multimodal specifics with regard to setting levels of service policies.

Mr. McDonald said the objectives are set out by policy and in the challenge the Council has set before the Commission, which is to establish or revise the existing LOS metrics for each applicable mode; establish or revise LOS standards by mode for roadway corridors and segments and/or for Mobility Management Areas; explore modifying the boundaries of the Mobility Management Areas (MMA); update the methodology used to track concurrency and to forecast LOS for long-range planning; create a tool to inform investment decisions for transportation projects that are implemented by the public sector through the CIP and by the private sector through development review; and to initiate a monitoring protocol to gather data and track performance.

Commissioner Zahn expressed concern about the level of effort it will take to revise the metrics for each mode. Mr. McDonald said staff has expressed those same concerns. A meeting was held with the consultants early on in the process where they were given direction not to burden the process with so much data that it will fail under its own weight. The ultimate outcome must be nimble, simple, understandable, readily monitorable and implementable.

Mr. Breiland said the approach is built around what the city has available to work with. The data the city has will be analyzed in terms of how people get around the city. The tools that will be developed will be applicable citywide, and will give staff the flexibility to look at different geographic scales, such as safe walks to schools or along commercial corridors. A flexible system is needed to reflect the fact that Bellevue has distinct and diverse areas; the downtown very different from Newport Hills, and Northtowne, while close to the downtown, has a single family low-density orientation. There has also been clear direction given to be able to apply the product by key transportation corridors.

Commissioner Woosley commented that the concurrency requirements are based on LOS compliance and they dictate the mitigation for developments. He asked if moving to things like how easy it is for a pedestrian to cross the street will become a determining factor in mitigation. Mr. Breiland said there are several approaches that can be taken with multimodal LOS. The cities that are adopting the new approach are putting it into their concurrency standards, thus adequate street crossing for pedestrians can be part of a concurrency evaluation for a development review. The trick is how to do that in a way that is not overly complicated and that will keep projects from being permitted. Regardless of the approach taken, unless the outcome is multimodal approach that is folded into the regulatory framework, the exercise becomes futile.

Mr. Breiland said many cities have struggled to address pedestrian and bicycle levels of service. When originally set up, many chose to emulate the auto level of service approach that is based on the space available to accommodate all the cars. Of course, that could mean that a sidewalk that is in terrible condition, or that does not go anywhere, will have no one on it, yielding a great pedestrian level of service. The proposed approach focuses on the quality of the pedestrian environment, or how nice it is for people to walk around their community.

Commissioner Bishop asked if the city has a standard for whether or not there should be sidewalks on both sides of streets. Mr. McDonald said the standard for arterial streets is for sidewalks on both sides. Mr. Breiland said the metrics once developed should be applicable to every street in the city, including neighborhoods like Surrey Downs where there are no sidewalks, to the arterials. However, from a concurrency point of view a pedestrian network should be identified, much like the city's functional classes for roadways. Just like roadways, sidewalks should have functional primary and secondary classifications depending on location and usage.

Mr. Breiland said under the proposed approach, the primary concurrency element is the presence of sidewalks, preferably on both sides of the street. Additional factors are the width of the sidewalk, which might vary based on where it is in the city; the width of buffers which might also vary based on location; how frequently crossings are spaced to allow for getting to the other side of the street, coupled with the type of street being crossed; the delay encountered in getting across the street; the level of traffic in the street; and how fast the traffic is moving in the street. The city already has much of the data in various forms of GIS. Work needs to be done with staff to figure out which if any of the pieces are missing and how much work it would be to generate them. The initial approach should not be overly ambitious but should capture the key elements of pedestrian level of service.

A motion to extend the meeting by 30 minutes was made by Commissioner Simas. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Woosley and the motion carried unanimously.

Mr. Breiland suggested utilizing a red (unacceptable), yellow (acceptable) and green (optimal) approach over a school-grade approach (A-F). The acceptable pedestrian level of service should vary based on context. For example, in the downtown environment a yellow or acceptable condition could be a sidewalk on both sides of an arterial streets having buffers of between five and eight feet, buffer widths of between zero and five feet, street crossings every 600 feet, and crossing delays of no more than 100 seconds. A failure in any one of those elements would result in a red or unacceptable condition. Additionally, in a neighborhood such as Lake Hills, yellow could be achieved by providing a sidewalk on only one side of the street

that is between four and five feet wide, with a buffer ranging from zero to five feet, a crossing frequency of only adjacent to schools, and a crossing delay of no more than 100 seconds.

Commissioner Simas asked if in terms of rule making having different standards in different places depending on the environment could become unruly. Mr. Breiland said the standard could simply be written to require a pedestrian level of service yellow for all pedestrian priority routes in the city. The definition for those priority routes might be five functional classifications of the routes, such as arterial streets, safe routes to schools, local roads and collector arterials. The evaluation would involve the GIS data and would determine simply whether the criteria are met or not.

Commissioner Zahn proposed that from a framing standpoint it would be better to use a word other than “unacceptable.” She suggested that if green is optimal, red should be sub-optimal or something similar. To call something unacceptable could trigger a cry from the public to make it acceptable, and that of course would mean spending money the city may not necessarily have.

Commissioner Woosley pointed out that over time the city has in fact chosen to lower its standards to avoid having to make the capital investments necessary to bring conditions up to the higher standard. Commissioner Zahn clarified that she was not advocating in favor of taking the pressure off of addressing what needs to be addressed, rather taking into account the fact that the city’s transportation budget is financially constrained.

Mr. McDonald stated that once the metrics are identified, it will be possible to test them to see how they work out in different environments around the city.

Chair Lampe suggested that pedestrian volume in the downtown would be a good metric to include. Mr. Breiland said challenge in taking that approach lies with the fact that the city collects some of the data that would be needed but not all of it. There are no comprehensive measurements of pedestrian volumes in the downtown.

Commissioner Zahn said volume will be a key element on the bicycle side of things as well. Mr. Breiland said both pedestrian and bicycle utilization are good performance indicators and worth monitoring. The degree to which sidewalks or bicycle facilities are used may be a reflection of how nice it is to use them; until such systems get crowded, volume data is far less useful.

Commissioner Zahn also suggested the speed of cars adjacent to bicycle facilities should also be a factor for consideration. Mr. Breiland explained that there are measures that have speed and volume baked into levels of service. For example, a busy road like Bellevue Way has lots of volume and in some sections higher speeds. Good bicycle levels of service cannot be achieved on high-volume roads given some of the metrics; it is not possible to reduce the volume of cars just to improve the level of service for bicycles. Commissioner Zahn agreed but argued that vehicle volumes and speeds should be accounted for in some way. Mr. Breiland said the factor is accounted in that traffic volumes dictate the amount of treatment needed to make bicyclists feel comfortable. Volume and speed are not, however, do not in and of themselves determine level of service.

Mr. Breiland explained that much like on the pedestrian side, bicycle level of service is determined based on facility type and context. Bicycle facilities can have different widths.

They can be created by painting a white line on an existing roadway, or they can involve dedicated off-street paths or trails. Street crossings, however, are more related to specific types of streets, such as arterials. Bicycle trips can be faster and longer, so corridor lengths tend to get extended out for purposes of evaluation.

Commissioner Simas commented that while facility type and location, as well as arterial crossing treatments, are all things the city has some control over. He noted, however, that grade was also included as a factor and questioned if it is a valid unit of measure for determining level of service. Mr. Breiland said grade is something that should be treated more like traffic volume. Grade may dictate the need for things like a bicycle climbing lane.

Commissioner Bishop suggested that usage is a more important element on the bicycle side than on the pedestrian side. Bicycle facilities could be characterized as having high, medium and low usage, leaving to another time what constitutes those levels. There could be a different standard for a low-usage facility over a high-usage facility. Mr. Breiland said the point is well taken. A low-usage bicycle facility may require as much infrastructure investment as a high-usage facility.

Commissioner Chirls said the bottom line in all instances must be safety. Even a low-volume bicycle facility could in fact be very dangerous because of other factors, including the speed of adjacent vehicles. Additionally, grade is an important element whether it be uphill or downhill; downhill calls for wider facilities, while uphill can be accommodated with a narrower facility. Two-way bicycle paths need to be addressed differently from one-way paths. Every effort should be put into understanding the issues from the perspective of the bicycle rider. Mr. Breiland pointed out that the proposed approach has the flexibility to be applied on any street based on the characteristics, and without any prescriptive sense of what elements should be in play. The approach is geared up to be overlaid with what the bicycle master plan, the Pedestrian and Bicycle Transportation Plan and the Transit Master Plan has defined as the corridors. Ultimately the focus will be on setting standards for each of those networks.

Turning to the topic of transit, Mr. Breiland allowed that transit service can be measured in a number of different ways; the Transit Master Plan in fact does that. However, in terms of setting a regulatory level of service standard, staff has been clear about the need to establish a standard for metrics that the city can control. For example, transit headways are not explicitly controlled by the city; that is done by the transit agencies, so it would not make sense to use headways as a factor in determining level of service. Transit level of service must be focused on capital infrastructure relative to what is provided to support transit, specifically the provision of shelter, seating, pedestrian access and associated bicycle parking.

Commissioner Woosley asked how bicycle parking, shelter and seating availability can be translated into what really needs to be measured, which is transit ridership. Mr. Breiland allowed that there is no strong quantitative correlation between those elements and ridership, with the exception of access. It is well documented that better transit access yields more ridership. However, by making transit more attractive than other modes, ridership can be encouraged.

Mr. McDonald reminded the Commissioners that in both the Transit Master Plan and the Downtown Transportation Plan describe different transit stop typologies. Different components are appropriate at the different types of transit stops. The level of service standards should be nuanced somewhat depending on the context of the type of transit stop.

The Commissioners were informed that nothing about the proposed approach changes anything about the way vehicle level of service is measured or addressed, except for shifting the gradation away from A-F to the red, yellow, green methodology. What constitutes green (acceptable) could be different by area, so that a green in the downtown may actually constitute a yellow or red in North Bellevue.

Mr. Breiland said the overall focus will be on the idea of the ultimate facility. While much is yet to be defined, one outcome could be consensus around the notion of not exceeding the footprint of an ultimate facility in order to address a level of service issue. Snohomish County has taken that approach and has designated 128th Avenue and 164th Avenue as ultimate capacity corridors because widening those roadways would involve encroaching on apartment buildings, stores and other uses, which would be very expensive. An example in Bellevue of where the approach might be applicable is NE 8th Street through the downtown; the area is built out and to widen it in order to achieve an improved level of service for autos would be overly expensive and problematic.

Commissioner Bishop pointed out that years back the city chose to purchase a row of houses in order to widen 148th Avenue and turn it into the urban arterial it is today. Mercer Street in Seattle has for years had the right-of-way needed to widen the road, and when the city finally bit the bullet it still had to buy out several businesses. Had either of those situations had a prohibition against extending beyond the ultimate footprint, neither project would have been doable. Mr. Breiland suggested Main Street through Old Bellevue could be defined as an ultimate corridor in that it has a look and feel that people want to see locked in.

Commissioner Zahn asked what the ultimate footprint label would ultimately serve. The fact is things change over time, including land uses and vehicle technologies. What are seen as good solutions currently may in a few years be obsolete. Labels should not be used for any street unless they truly have an identifiable benefit. Mr. Breiland said the point is well taken but suggested that when the time comes to delve into how the pieces layer on top of each other, the concept of the ultimate facility may become clearer.

Commissioner Bishop noted that the city's development service department has a list of traffic engineering firms deemed acceptable to apply the standards. That group might be a stakeholder group to be contacted for input as things moved forward.

Commissioner Woosley added that ultimately the new approach will lead to a redefinition of level of service. There are legal compliance standards that regulate not only how the city applies its standards but also to how the city complies with state regulations.

8. OLD BUSINESS – None
9. NEW BUSINESS – None
10. PUBLIC COMMENT – None
11. REPORTS FROM COMMISSIONERS

Commissioner Woosley reported that he recently attended a meeting with the state Transportation Commission's newest member Shiv Batra. The focus was on changes the state

intends to make relative to I-405 hot lane operations.

Commissioner Simas noted that a couple of crosswalks are being put in on 140th Avenue NE and that the work has been under way for more than two months. He said he contacted staff and learned that the contracts with the contractor do not stipulate that the work must be done within a certain amount of time. He suggested the city might want to look more closely at how it contracts for small projects. Dragging out the work does not serve the residents well.

12. STAFF REPORTS

Mr. McDonald reported that Chair Lampe and Vice Chair Zahn provided the Council with the Commission's recommendations relative to the Vision Zero policy. The Council then acted to initiate a Comprehensive Plan amendment for the 2016 amendment cycle under which the Planning Commission is directed to integrate the work of the Transportation Commission into the Transportation Element of the Comprehensive Plan. The Council was very complimentary of the work done by the Transportation Commission.

With regard to the Downtown Transportation Plan, Mr. McDonald said at its meeting on March 7 the Council approved the construction contract to retrofit the narrow ramp near the top of the Pedestrian Corridor. The contract contains a window of only 30 days in which to do the work.

Mr. McDonald said he would be attending the upcoming Washington Bicycle Summit in Tacoma. He said he would provide a report to the Commission on the latest happenings at the statewide level with respect to bicycle mobility.

With regard to the concept of the Grand Connection, which stretches from Meydenbauer Bay through the downtown and across the freeway to Wilburton, Mr. McDonald said the Planning and Community Development has scheduled a three-day charrette April 7-9 with professionals from all over the country and an internationally renowned consultant team. The session will largely be closed door, but on Saturday, April 9, there will be opportunity for the city's boards and commissions as well as staff to attend the outcome presentation. The biggest infrastructure piece will be the crossing of the freeway, and it is expected that the charrette will come up with an iconic structure.

13. COMMISSION CALENDAR

Mr. McDonald reminded the Commissioners about the Pedestrian and Bicycle Implementation Initiative open house on March 23. The Commission's workshop focused on the topic is slated for March 24.

Mr. McDonald informed the Commissioners that there would be two meetings in April and probably also in May.

14. ADJOURN

Chair Lampe adjourned the meeting at 9:53 p.m.